

# Stay safe online!

There's lots of fun to be had on the Web. Chatting, listening to music, meeting new friends from around the world. Use these five rules to keep it fun.

- **Rule 1:** Keep your personal information to yourself.
- **Rule 2:** People may not be who they say they are.
- **Rule 3:** Don't open attachments from strangers.
- **Rule 4:** Tell an adult you trust if something online makes you feel uncomfortable.
- **Rule 5:** Meeting online strangers alone is dangerous.

## **Rule 1: Keep your personal information to yourself**

There are some people out there who devote their lives to collecting little pieces of personal information about you. And that could be dangerous.

Don't use your own name as your online name. Get creative, and make one up! (Your parents can help.)

Never, ever give out information about your family or yourself. Never tell anyone online your name, phone number, address, where you go to school or like to play, passwords, and other private stuff.

Don't share photos of yourself or your family with online strangers.

If you keep a log on the Web (or blog), keep it anonymous. And don't link your blog to any of your other online stuff.

## **Rule 2: People may not be who they say they are**

There are two broad types of people online worth avoiding. The easiest way to get rid of people like this is to tell them that you are saving the conversation on your computer, and will be reporting them.

**The Random Abuser** - This person could be male or female. He or she will crawl around chat rooms being abusive, sexually suggestive, and generally a bit of a creep, making people feel rotten. Don't worry; these people are mostly dull, unimaginative and pointless, so just ignore them. If they won't go away, report them.

**The Pervert** - This is the person your parents fear most. He or she will want to understand everything about you, and pretend to be your friend. He or she will save any information about you that you give. The pervert wants your telephone number, your address, your photograph -- and above all, wants to meet you. He or she may be wanted by the police, so report them right away.

### **Rule 3: Don't open attachments from strangers**

If you open files, links, or e-mail attachments from strangers, you could be opening a virus, or downloading bad software, a disturbing image, or something else that your day would be a whole lot better without. Even if it's from someone you know, check with them to be doubly sure before you open it.

### **Rule 4: Tell an adult you trust if something online makes you feel uncomfortable**

Always tell a parent, teacher, or other adult you trust if you feel scared or threatened online. If someone you talk to online makes you feel uneasy or upset, never respond to them. If you feel threatened, then you or your parents should definitely call the police. And remember, if you see something online that makes you feel uncomfortable, you can always just switch off the computer.

### **Rule 5: Meeting online strangers alone is dangerous**

People you haven't met in the real world are strangers. They could be terrific. They could be boring. They could be funny, or even mad, bad and dangerous to know. It may not be a good idea to meet someone in person whom you've met online.

However, if you really want to meet an online friend in person:

Always keep in mind that someone you meet online may not be who they seem to be or who they tell you they are. Be aware that someone you met in a chat room may not be a kid at all, but could really be an older adult. One of your parents or an adult relative must go along with you, and stay with you the entire time.

Meet in a busy public place, and stay there. Do not go somewhere alone with this stranger.

Don't let the stranger talk you into doing anything that makes you even the least bit uncomfortable.

And... Don't change your mind on any of the above.